

# **BARD THEATER & PERFORMANCE PROGRAM**

## **PRESENTS**

# **MAD FOREST**

A Play from Romania

By Caryl Churchill

Directed by Ashley Tata

April 10, 2020

7 pm EST Live Webcast

Preshow begins at 6:30 pm EST

YouTube Live: [bit.ly/MadForestYT](https://bit.ly/MadForestYT)

Facebook Live: [bit.ly/MadForestFB](https://bit.ly/MadForestFB)

The live webcast of Mad Forest is a project of UPSTREAMING: the Fisher Center at Bard's Virtual Stage.

[fishercenter.bard.edu/upstreaming/](https://fishercenter.bard.edu/upstreaming/)

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the spring production of Bard's undergraduate Theater & Performance Program – Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*, directed by Ashley Tata.

When Ashley and I first discussed *Mad Forest* as a timely play to stage with our students at Bard, we had no idea that the world would be in the grip of a pandemic. Halfway through the rehearsal process, as it became clear that circumstances would make physical performances impossible, we were faced with a decision: should we cancel the project outright, or try in some way to move it into the digital realm? It seemed crucial to honor the work our amazing students had already done, and to demonstrate that art doesn't simply vanish in times of great distress and need. At the same time, we wondered, how could the production be reconfigured for virtual presentation in such a short time? How might it do justice to Churchill's great text? How could it even be rehearsed, with the cast all in remote locations, let alone performed for a live audience?

I'm sure you'll agree that the performance you'll see tonight is an inspiring answer to these questions. Ashley, our students, and the creative team have thrillingly risen to the challenge, and have perhaps even found layers in *Mad Forest* that a physical production might not have revealed. I'm enormously proud of their work, which is emblematic of the entrepreneurial spirit of Bard, the Fisher Center, and of artists everywhere struggling to make sense of the emergency of our present moment. Please join me in congratulating them on their courage, dedication, and brilliance. Whether you're watching the production live with us on Friday evening, or in the archive on subsequent days, I wish you all a wonderful time in the theater.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gideon Lester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gideon Lester  
Director, Theater & Performance Program  
Artistic Director, Fisher Center at Bard

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## **Bard Theater & Performance Program**

presents

### **MAD FOREST**

A Play from Romania

Written by **Caryl Churchill**

Directed by **Ashley Tata**

Scenic Design by **Afsoon Pajoufar**

Costume Design by **Ásta Bennie Hostetter**

Lighting Design by **Abigail Hoke-Brady**

Compositions and Sound Design by **Paul Pinto**

Movement Direction by **Daniel Safer**

Video Design by **Eamonn Farrell**

Production Stage Manager **Vanessa C. Hart**

*Appearing courtesy of Actors' Equity Association*

Video Programming by **Andy Carluccio**

Video Operation by **Connor Martin**

Properties Master **Shane Crittenden**

Assistant Stage Manager **Anisha Hosangady\***

Assistant Stage Manager/Sound Operator **Maggie McFarland\***

Assistant Directors **Laila Perlman\*** and **Angela Woodack\***

\*Bard Student

*MAD FOREST* is presented through special arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [concordtheatricals.com](http://concordtheatricals.com)

Thanks to Ryan Gardener and Joe & Jen Brondo for special tech support.

Special thanks to Mel Kenyon.

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# Cast

Bogdan/Translator/Vampire .....Phil Carroll\*  
Bogdan's Grandfather/Angel/Boy Student 2 ..... Andrew Omar Crisol\*  
Ianoş/Painter/Old Aunt ..... Lily Goldman\*  
Radu/Boy Student 1 .....Tim Halvorsen\*  
Flavia/House Painter ..... Mica Hastings\*  
Bogdan's Grandmother/Scribe/Someone With a Sore Throat ..... Azalea Hudson\*  
Lucia/Girl Student ..... Ali Kane\*  
Mihai/Doctor/Wayne/Soldier/Patient/Ghost/Soldier 2 (of Rodica's Nightmare) ..... Gavin  
McKenzie\*  
Irina/Rodica/Waiter .....Taty Rozetta\*  
Florina/Student Doctor ..... Violet Savage\*  
Gabriel/Flavia's Grandmother/Toma/Bulldozer Driver ..... Yibin (Bill) Wang\*  
Priest/Securitate Officer/Soldier 1 (of Rodica's Nightmare) .....Charlie Wood\*

\*Bard Student

# Director's Note

From an old notebook: *Überevent: the point past which one cannot go back to the way things were. The core of these events reveals the true nature of a character to the audience and sometimes to oneself.*

In Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*, we witness the before (Act I) and after (Act III) of a nation's Überevent through the actions of characters who comprise the Vladu and Antonescu families. The main event is the Romanian Revolution which occurred in December of 1989 and resulted in the overthrow and execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena, ending decades of brutal dictatorship. Act II presents the days of the revolution documentary-style from eyewitness accounts of people who Churchill, Mark Wing-Davey (the original production's director) and their class of acting students interviewed in Bucharest, Romania in the spring of 1990, mere months after the events of the play that they were writing occurred. Though they didn't have the historical perspective to see what the lasting implications of this event would have, their work hits a note that resonates from 30 years ago to today: with change comes enormous responsibility. The third act is full of arguments and suspicions about the validity of their revolution. It is not enough to cause a dictator's downfall or to survive the crest of change. As upheaval settles to normal, there are those who will clamor to return life to the way things were. The responsibility falls upon the majority to see possibility in change and keep a reflexive return to "normal" at bay.

When faced with the option of cancelling our production, there was that part of me that reflexively contracted to "the show must go on." Fortunately, there was immense support and trust in developing an expansive manifestation of this work during decidedly abnormal and into new normal circumstances. Continuing required us to re-conceive the entirety of the production, being rigorous in all departments to not broadcast an IRL-conceived show. We would work to create a live production for a virtual stage. We found the material breathed differently in this space. There have been many reflections about how TV and the amateur camera were a fundamental medium that conveyed and shaped the message of the Romanian Revolution. State-run, regularly televised addresses are the medium of choice for dictators. As it was for the Ceaușescus. Churchill's play references the days when the television station was occupied by revolutionaries. They

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opened the doors so citizens – victims of the regime – could testify and bear witness to how governmental policies had affected them for decades. There were lines around the block and citizens tuned in to their fellow witnesses for days on end. Transitioning to this format and incorporating it as a design and meta-theatrical element seems almost obvious. Of course, now I wish we had conceived of it as a Zoom production when we began our design process. As I write that, I'm shocked to realize that three weeks ago I didn't even know what Zoom was.

Spoiler alert: the play ends in a wedding. But unlike a comedy in which this signifies a reunification of society, these families are in chaos. Having been released from censorship, the characters speak on top of each other in a cacophony of their pure distilled selves. Rising above the din is the voice of the Vampire – a character deeply entwined in Romanian lore and a hushed title the Romanian people nominated Ceaușescu with – speaking a mantra of empty need: “You begin to want blood. Your limbs ache, your head burns, you have to keep moving faster and faster.”

The response to Überevents reveals our character. We can reveal our better nature and expansively strengthen society, or succumb to fear and act out of self-preservation, resulting in the continuation of violent, empty, restrictive and destructive cycles.

Making this work is a commitment to community. We have continued with the responsibility we have to each other and to those who seek and find refuge in the works we create. We offer this as a testament to the possibility that can be found during times of great upheaval. And commit to responsibly make work for and with each other long after this moment of change settles into the way things will be.

With immense gratitude to the company of performers, the collaborators and the team at the Fisher Center. And in dedication to all those who are taking on the responsibility of shepherding us safely through this time.

*Ashley Tata, Director*

# Who's Who

**Caryl Churchill** (Author) is one of the most influential and significant contemporary British dramatists working today. Her work frequently deals with feminism, the abuses of power, and sexual politics. The author of more than 30 plays, as well as a number of adaptations and translations, she has reshaped the theatre landscape and continues to produce adventurous new work. Churchill's work has constantly evolved and shifted in style and content in her relentless efforts to both reflect and represent the modern world. Her content has embraced Brechtian distancing, surrealism and other forms such as dance and opera. Over the years, if anything is certain with Churchill's theatre, is its unwavering commitment to engender surprise, and her determination to remain decidedly indefinable.

**Ashley Tata** (Director) is a director of multi-media works of theater, contemporary opera, performance, live music, and immersive experiences. Her work frequently sits at the intersection of music, installation, and performance and has been presented in venues and festivals around the country and the world including LA Opera, Austin Opera, The Miller Theater, Mass MoCA, National Sawdust, The Kitchen, EMPAC, BPAC, Dixon Place, Roulette Intermedium, HERE Arts Center, The Crossing the Line Festival, the Holland Festival, The National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, and the Fisher Center at Bard (including 2016's *Don Juan*). Her production of David T. Little's *Soldier Songs* with video by Bill Morrison was called an "extraordinarily powerful production" by *The LA Times*, and her production of Kate Soper's *Ipsa Dixit* was named a notable production of the decade by Alex Ross of *The New Yorker*. As an associate director she has worked with Jay Scheib, Robert Woodruff, Richard Jones and Daniel Fish (including *Oklahoma!* at St. Ann's Warehouse). She earned her MFA at Columbia University and has taught at Mannes School of Music, Harvard University, MIT, Marymount Manhattan College, Colgate College, Bard College, LIU Post and NYU. She is a member of the Lincoln Center Theater's Directors' Lab, the recipient of the Lotos Foundation's Emerging Artist Award in Arts and Sciences and a winner of the 2017 Robert L. B. Tobin Director/Designer grant. As a result of the pandemic most of her upcoming projects have been cancelled with the exception of Euripides' *Orestes* at University of Rochester in the spring of 2021. There will be a spring in 2021. As of this broadcast she is available for hire. More information including how to get in contact to collaborate can be found at: [ashleytata.com](http://ashleytata.com)

**Afsoon Pajoufar** (Scenic Designer) is a NYC based freelance designer of stage and environment for play, opera and live performance. Arriving at set design from a background in fine arts and film, she earned her MFA in Set Design at Boston University. Her designs have been seen at Harvard TDM, MIT, New Repertory Theatre, Kitchen Theatre, Gloucester Stage, Actor's Shakespeare Company, Corkscrew and Prelude Festivals. Her design for *Cabaret* was chosen for the 2019 American Exhibit at the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. Afsoon moved to the United States from Tehran, Iran. [afsoonpajoufar.com](http://afsoonpajoufar.com)

**Ásta Bennie Hostetter** (Costume Designer) is a costume designer whose recent work includes: *Gnit* (Theater for a New Audience), *Mrs. Murrays Menagerie* (Mad Ones), *Usual Girls* (Roundabout Underground), *Dance Nation* (Playwrights Horizon), *Bobbie Clearly* (Roundabout Underground), *The Lucky Ones* (Ars Nova), *Miles for Mary* (Playwrights Horizon), *Porto* (WP Theater), *Wolves* (Lincoln Center), *John* (Signature), *Men on Boats* (Playwrights Horizons). Regional: *Goodnight Nobody* (McCarter), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cal Shakes) *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night* (KCrep), *El Coquí Espectacular* (Two River). Member of minor theater, Target Margin Theater, The Mad Ones. She has an MFA in Theater Design from CalArts.

**Abigail Hoke-Brady** (Lighting Designer) is a New York based lighting designer. Recent design projects include *The Last American Hammer* and *FLORIDA* (UrbanArias), *Glory Denied* and *Three Decembers* (Tri Cities Opera), *Bound* (Fresh Squeezed Opera), *Silent Voices* (Brooklyn Youth Chorus), *The Little Death vol 1* (Prototype), *MukhAgni* (Ars Nova, Under the Radar). Current and upcoming projects include *Much Ado About Nothing* (HPAC/The Public Theater - LD), *Aging Magician* (San Diego Opera - Associate LD), *The Barber of Seville* (San Diego Opera - Associate LD). Lighting Design Mentor for Williams College senior projects (Spring 2020). 2017 recipient of the Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Grant, Opera America. MFA NYU 2016. Member USA 829. [hokebradydesigns.com](http://hokebradydesigns.com)

**Paul Pinto** (Composer and Sound Designer) is glad to be making sounds. He's a composer, writer and multi-disciplinary performer who founded the music collectives thingNY and Varispeed, with whom he creates immersive, durational and dramatic chamber and electronic music. His latest albums include *Patriots* with Jeffrey Young, *Empty Words* with Varispeed and Robert Ashley's *Improvement*. As a vocalist, Paul

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works on a diverse array of new projects, including performing Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, originating the role of "Balaga" in the Broadway musical *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*, and in his own work including the opera *Thomas Paine in Violence* with Joan La Barbara, and the Resonant Bodies Festival commission of *15 Photos*. This year: commissions for *Quince*, *The Rhythm Method*, and *Shepherdess*, guest artistic curator for the MATA Festival, and (to account for our current satellite existence) music videos with LoveLoveLove and Aleks Karjaka, and the premiere of thingNY's *SubtractTTTTTTTTT*, streaming nightly on Apr. 24, 25 and 26. [pfpinto.com](http://pfpinto.com)

**Daniel Safer** (Movement Director) is Artistic Director of [Witness Relocation](#) and has directed/ choreographed all of their shows, ranging from fully scripted plays to original dance/theater pieces to many things in between. Dan choreographed and co-directed the acclaimed *UBU SINGS UBU* with Tony Torn (Abrons, Slipper Room, American Rep, BB King's, Highline Ballroom). His work as a choreographer has been at BAM, DTW, Danspace, Ash Lawn Opera, and many other places. In 2011, he choreographed Stravinsky's *RITE OF SPRING* for Philadelphia Orchestra with Obie-winners Ridge Theater. Artforum Magazine called him "pure expressionistic danger" and Time Out NY called him "a purveyor of lo-fi mayhem." Currently, he is faculty at MIT. He got kicked out of high school for a year, used to be a go-go dancer, and once choreographed the Queen of Thailand's Birthday Party.

**Eamonn Farrell** (Video Designer) Eamonn Farrell is a Virginia-based theater maker and video designer. With his Brooklyn-based company, Anonymous Ensemble, he has created dozens of original media-infused shows, installations, and live webcasts in New York City and around the world. Notable productions include *The Best* (Ice Factory Festival, Brisbane International Festival), *Wanderlust* (Edinburgh Fringe, UK Tour, Norway Tour), *The Return* (Theatro Chora, Theatro Roes), *The Turing Opera* (Greek National Opera, National Sawdust), *LIEBE LOVE AMOUR!* (HERE, Prelude, Duke, Wesleyan, The New Ohio), *I Land* (NC Stage, Princeton, Incubator Arts), *Ship of Fools* (HERE), and *The Future* (UNC, Chashama). Eamonn designs video extensively for Lee Breuer of Mabou Mines including *Pataphysics Pennyeach*, *La Divina Caricatura*, *Opera Antigone*, and *Medea*. Eamonn also collaborates frequently with artist Sarah Michelson in the creation of performances and installation projects. Other design credits include *B3 Dance* (Bessie

Nomination), LA Dance, The LA Phil, Parsons Dance, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Portland Center Stage. Eamonn has taught projections design at Princeton, City College, and UVA.

**Vanessa Hart** (Production Stage Manager) has a BA in Theatre from Franklin and Marshall College. She has been the AEA ASM for the Peterborough Players Summer Season for 3 years, and the AEA PSM for the Peterborough Players Winter Season for 3 years. Previously, she stage managed Rebel and Misfits Productions' *Sex with Strangers* and *Hamlet: See What I See* in Saint Louis. In PA, she stage managed F&M's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Three Sisters*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, as well as The People's Shakespeare Project of Lancaster's *The Tempest*, and Wee Keep Company's *Three Sisters* and *A Wolf*. Thank you to the Fisher Center for letting us create in such chaotic and extraordinary times.

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The Theater and Performance Program aims to develop innovative thinkers and artists who use great theatrical ideas from the past and present to imagine and instigate the theater of the future. Theater and performance are intrinsically collaborative art forms, and collaboration and devised theater-making are at the heart of Bard's program. The program trains well-rounded theater-makers who study the history, theory, and contemporary practice of theater and performance, hone their technical abilities as writers, performers and directors, and create their own productions and performances under the mentorship of master artists and teachers.

## About the Fisher Center

The Fisher Center develops, produces, and presents performing arts across disciplines through new productions and context-rich programs that challenge and inspire. As a premier professional performing arts center and a hub for research and education, the Fisher Center supports artists, students, and audiences in the development and examination of artistic ideas, offering perspectives from the past and present, as well as visions of the future. Home is the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by Frank Gehry and located on the campus of Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley. The Fisher Center offers outstanding programs to many communities, including the students and faculty of Bard College, and audiences in the Hudson Valley, New York City, across the country, and around the world. The Fisher Center demonstrates Bard's commitment to the performing arts as a cultural and educational necessity. Building on a 150-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. [fishercenter.bard.edu](https://fishercenter.bard.edu)